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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2009

In Today's Papers

Clinton to Seek Support for Iraq Exit in Turkey
Mainstream Aksam reports today in front-page coverage "During Secretary Clinton's visit to Turkey, the U.S. will ask Turkey for logistical support in the withdrawal of U.S. soldiers from Iraq." Aksam says, "Turkey is the most suitable route for the US, both from an economic and security point of view," adding "Turkey will have to pass a motion or issue a government decree to authorize cooperation with the US on the issue." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports that "In exchange for its support for the US, Turkey is expected to ask the new administration to block Armenian genocide claims and support the liquidation of the PKK."

Editorial Commentary on the US-Turkey Ties

Murat Yetkin wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "Secretary Clinton's Turkey visit has a wide range of agenda issues to discuss, including Iraq, Afghanistan, PKK, Hamas, energy and Iran as well as a pending Armenian genocide resolution in Congress. However, it is not realistic to expect concrete decisions from Secretary's visit because the new American administration's European policy has not been fully shaped yet. U/S for European Affairs Philip Gordon is still in the Congressional approval process. The fight against the PKK, however, is the most stable aspect of cooperation between Turkey and the United States. The cooperation is military in nature and will continue until President Obama invalidates the National Security Order signed by former president Bush in November 2007. Information coming from diplomatic sources indicate that Turkey expects a robust military action from the U.S. against the PKK if and when needed. Ankara has raised this expectation with visiting high-level U.S. officials to Turkey. Even though the two are not related to each other, Turkey seems to expect an active contribution from the U.S. to its fight against terrorism while Turkey is expected to do the same in Afghanistan as part of the NATO mission to fight against terrorism".

Hasan Cemal wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "April 24 is the most important date for Turkey right after the local elections. The pending Armenian genocide resolution in Congress is not only a

concern to Turkey, but it is also of direct concern to the U.S as well as Armenia. Concerned parties should think twice before creating a new crisis which might be an essential source for instability. If President Obama makes a mistake on April 24, it will close the door for normalization between Turkey and Armenia, and also U.S.-Turkey relations will be hit with a deadly blow."

Donors Pledge Aid in Gaza, Excluding Hamas

Media outlets report that the leaders of 87 countries made aid pledges amounting to \$4.5 billion to rebuild Gaza and excluded Hamas rulers from the conference in Sharm al-Sheikh on Monday. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports in, "First Peace, Then Aid," that "it was highlighted by the leaders that reconstruction aid would not have a lasting effect without peace which requires a political solution." Mainstream Hurriyet notes, "Clinton urged the international community to take steps to establish peace in the Middle East and end violence," adding, "the US has promised a \$900 million aid preventing the money transferred to the wrong hands referring to Hamas." Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak notes, "the US and Saudi Arabia pledged the largest amount while most of the countries asked that the money be under the Palestinian Administration President Mahmoud Abbas's control and that Hamas is excluded." Mainstream Sabah carries the headline, "One State Destroyed, 87 Trying to Reconstruct," adding "Turkey pledged \$200 million for the Gaza rebuilding."

Editorial Commentary on Gaza Donors' Conference

Erdal Safak wrote in mainstream Sabah: "Making generous contributions for Gaza's rebuilding is good, but not enough."

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Rebuilding Gaza requires the Palestinians to overcome their administration crisis and present a unified presence. Unless the Palestinian groups are reconciled, Gaza will continue to suffer."

Mehmet Yilmaz wrote in Islamist-oriented Zaman: "International efforts for the rebuilding of Gaza have reached a good stage with statements from many countries expressing a readiness to make a financial contribution to Gaza. However, there is still a big question mark on how this financial support will reach to Gaza and how it will be spent. Some countries have openly stated that their money should not reach the hands of certain Palestinian groups. All of this shows the urgency of reconciliation between Palestinian groups."

Exports Fall Sharply in February

Cumhuriyet, Vatan, Radikal, Sabah, Milliyet, Hurriyet: Today's papers draw attention to the sharp fall in exports. Mainstream Vatan gives extensive front page coverage to the issue with a headline "One Engine Stopped, We are in Turbulence" and notes that "we are not talking about a plane crash, but the economy. Turkey's monthly exports income dropped by half, this means one of the engines stopped. One US Dollar is over 1.73 Turkish lira because of the turbulence in the markets." Liberal Radikal reports that according to the figures of the Turkish Exporters' Assembly (TIM), exports in February dropped 35 percent when compared to figures from the previous year.

DEA's Leonhart: Turkey Effective in Blocking Heroin Transport to Europe

Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet carries a talk with the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) Deputy Administrator Michele Leonhart on the State Department report on narcotics trafficking. Leonhart says that in 2008, Turkey displayed "16 percent of effectiveness" in blocking the transport of heroin coming from Afghanistan to Europe and other countries. The PKK has been involved in crimes related to drug trafficking, says Leonhart, adding they were trying, in accordance with the counter-terrorism law in the US, to cut the sources which help the terror organization to finance its actions, reports Cumhuriyet.

Verheugen: "We Made A Big Mistake"

Mainstream Sabah and conservative-nationalist Turkiye report that European Commission's deputy chairman Gunter Verheugen criticized EU countries for giving negative messages to Turkey by saying "Turkey

has a critical importance for Europe in terms of energy and security. However, we could not present a reliable course for Ankara." Verheugen added that he is not surprised that Turkey's desire for reforms dropped under these conditions.

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- Turkey's elite business group TUSIAD's chair Arzuhan Yalcindag says the AKP government was planning to delay the signing of a new stand-by deal with the IMF until after the municipality elections.
- A convoy of 100 military vehicles and personnel was dispatched yesterday to the Cudi Mountains for Turkish military operations against the PKK terrorists in Sirnak province on the border with Iraq.
- A retired police officer threatened to commit suicide outside of the Prime Minister's Office, saying his low income was not enough to pay his debts.
- Turkey's leading mobile phone operator Turkcell says in a statement it was working to acquire Macedonian peer Cosmofon.

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World

- On Tuesday, Deputy PM Nazim Ekren and Tevfik Bilgin, the head of Turkey's banking watchdog, BDDK, will travel to the US to meet the new US administration and hold talks with the IMF and World Bank officials.
- President Abdullah Gul will visit Iran on March 10 to participate in a meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).
- The head of the UN nuclear monitoring agency IAEA, Muhammad al-Baradei, says Damascus is blocking IAEA efforts to establish whether it tried to secretly build a plutonium producing reactor.
- An Iraqi court sentences to death a former Iraqi general, Ali Hasan al-Majeed, known as "Chemical Ali" for his role in the forced deportation and massacre of the Shiites in 1999.

JEFFREY